

VZCZCXRO0394
PP RUEHBI
DE RUEHLM #0594 1551152
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 041152Z JUN 09
FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0083
INFO RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 1723
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 8735
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 6969
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 5025
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 3103
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO 4984
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 4090
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 9355
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 6660
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO 1189
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1235
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 3579
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS

UNCLAS COLOMBO 000594

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INSB

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: PRESIDENT RAJAPAKSA'S VICTORY PARADE
SPEECH CRITICAL OF WEST

¶1. (U) The Government of Sri Lanka's June 3 "National Victory Parade" was an elaborately staged tribute to the military forces' defeat of the LTTE. The event featured thousands of servicemen parading on Galle Face Green, displays of naval and air assets, and folkloric dancers, also numbering in the thousands. Charge and DATT attended.

¶2. (U) President Rajapaksa opened his speech in Tamil, as he did in Parliament two weeks ago, emphasizing that the war was fought against the LTTE not against the Tamil people, that Sri Lanka was the motherland of all the country's people, and that all Sri Lankans should live as brothers and sisters. The president indirectly criticized the previous government for supporting the peace process with the LTTE. He said massive redevelopment of the North, equal in effort to what was required to defeat the LTTE, was now needed.

¶3. (U) The President criticized outside interference by foreign nations and praised Sri Lanka's good relations with Asian, African, and Arab countries. He said: "As a nation we have to go very far to make our independence complete. Terrorists were able to get the world to bring pressure on us, a free and sovereign state. That was possible because the terrorists had the capability to bring pressure on those governments. Therefore, it is necessary to begin a new era in foreign relations to safeguard my motherland. Having won the freedom of our motherland, we must next establish our freedom and sovereignty internationally. We have honest, close, and friendly relations with our neighboring countries in Asia. We have also been able to build genuine good relations with the Arab and African countries. Those honest friends have carried out the greatest responsibility toward our freedom and sovereignty in this era. We value very much the assistance we received from all those countries at this moment." Full text of the speech has been e-mailed to the desk.

¶4. (SBU) A glossy, 115-page, government-published book entitled "Chapter Closed: The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam" was distributed to attendees at the parade. It takes numerous swipes at Norway, but does not completely spare the U.S. "...the LTTE was successful in hoodwinking important

individuals in the international community. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, showing remarkable disposition to disingenuous comment, called for a ceasefire." The text continues: "President Obama said that the situation in Sri Lanka was of catastrophic proportion." Both of these quotations are incorrect, and Charge will raise their inaccuracies with the Foreign Ministry.

15. (SBU) COMMENT: Reaction to the speech has been mixed. Parts of the speech had a somewhat more conciliatory tone towards Sri Lankan Tamils than the President's "victory speech" to Parliament two weeks previously, but there were no details offered about exactly how a Tamil-Sinhalese reconciliation would be achieved. Many Post contacts in the Tamil community said they did not bother to listen to the speech, expecting nothing new. Others contacts worried about the anti-Western tone of some portions, wondering what if it signaled a new direction of Sri Lankan foreign relations. Others expressed hope that the rhetoric and nationalistic tributes of the current period of "national celebration" would soon be complete, so that post-conflict reconciliation and rebuilding could begin.

MOORE